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Blase Cupich

Chicago's New Archbishop

By Kelsey Schagemann

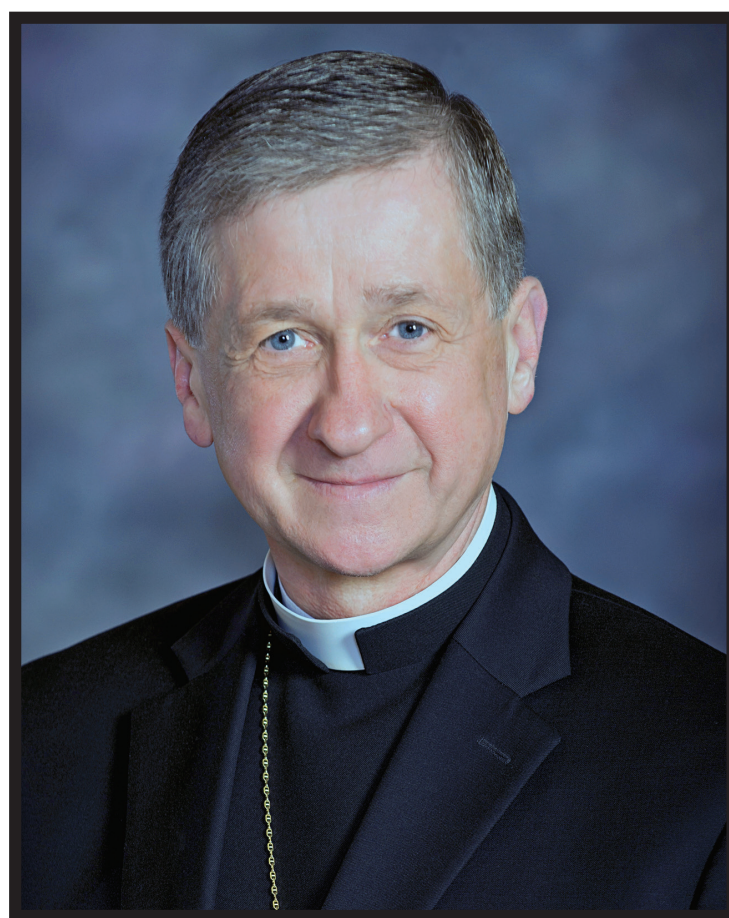
During the September 2014 press conference announcing his appointment by Pope Francis as the ninth archbishop of Chicago, the Most Rev. Blase J. Cupich emphasized the importance of listening. "My first priority is just to get to know the people," Cupich stated. Cupich was humble when he talked about the appointment. "My breath was taken away," he said. "I hope I can measure up to the responsibility."

Cupich, a native of Omaha, Neb., returns to the Midwest after serving as bishop of Spokane, Wash., since 2010. Previously, Cupich was bishop of Rapid City, N.D., for 12 years. "This is an enormous upgrade, so to speak," Cupich said, referring to Chicago's large size. With 2.2 million Catholics, the archdiocese of Chicago is the third largest in the country, after Los Angeles and New York City. Cupich was officially installed as archbishop during an afternoon mass at Holy Name Cathedral on Nov. 18, 2014.

His appointment generated interest on a national level. "As a flagship diocese in the United States, this nomination helps signal the direction of the Church," explains William Cavanaugh, professor of Catholic studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and director of the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology. "There's a lot of excitement and enthusiasm about Archbishop Cupich because he seems to represent the kinds of things that Pope Francis has encouraged, such as mercy and closeness to the poor."

Sharing a mission of service, the archdiocese of Chicago and DePaul have partnered on a variety of projects throughout the years. "Over the last two decades, the university has established a number of programs and initiatives to support the archdiocese, including the Vincentian Community Service Fellowship program, which has provided graduate scholarships to employees of Catholic Charities," says the Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., DePaul's president. "Our involvement in the transformation of Gordon Tech High School into DePaul College Prep is another example, as well as the numerous service sites for our students supporting Catholic schools and other institutions within the archdiocese."

The relationship between DePaul and the archdiocese of Chicago can be traced back to the university's origins. "DePaul owes its existence to the invitation issued by the first archbishop of Chicago, the Most Rev. Patrick Feehan, to the Vincentians to found a Catholic college on the city's rapidly growing North Side," says Fr. Holtschneider. "Archbishop Feehan was vitally interested in supporting Catholic education in the



archdiocese of Chicago, an interest that has been shared by all of his successors during the last century."

Based on Cupich's past commitment to educational, youth and social justice issues, it seems likely that he will maintain this trend. Cupich is the chairman of the National Catholic Educational Association and served on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People from 2008 to 2011. Cupich also sits on the board of governors for the Chicago-based Catholic Extension, which helps strengthen impoverished dioceses around the country.